

Timothy Pratt House  
325 Main Street  
Old Saybrook  
Middlesex County  
Connecticut

HABS No. CT-370

HABS  
CONN,  
4-SAYBO,  
9-

PHOTOGRAPH

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

TIMOTHY PRATT HOUSE

HABS No. CT-370

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CONH,  
4-SAYB2,  
9-

Location: 325 Main Street, Old Saybrook, Middlesex County,  
Connecticut.

Present Owner/  
Occupant: Mrs. Harriet Naughton

Present Use: Residence.

Significance: The Timothy Pratt House is a large, central-chimney, frame house. Its eighteenth-century character has been well-preserved through the years and its location at the intersection of Main Street and Pennywise Lane makes it an important visual landmark in this historic area of the community. The Pratt family was important in the development of Saybrook from the time of their arrival in the mid seventeenth century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Old Saybrook Historical Society traditionally had considered the date of this house to be 1771 but on the basis of an earlier report by the Colonial Dames, the birth dates of Timothy Jr. and Sr., and the general style of the house, the date now generally accepted is ca. 1746.

Timothy Pratt, Sr., was born in 1713, and was a direct descendant of Lieut. William Pratt who came to Saybrook in the mid seventeenth century, having received a grant for serving in the Pequot War.

By the time Timothy was born, the Pratt family owned a great deal of land in the area where the house stands. Timothy's father, Isaac, had given land across the street from this house to the church for a new meeting house. Timothy married Sarah Parker and their son Timothy, Jr., was born in 1748. Timothy, Jr., became a deacon in the Congregational Church in 1823, which was also the year he died.

According to one source a private school was kept here in the 1790s. Timothy, Jr., passed the house to his son William in 1817.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The main house is two-and-a-half stories with a five-bay front. A one-and-a-half-story ell is attached to the west side of the house.

2. Foundations: The low foundation is of dressed, coursed stone with a narrow wooden water table.
3. Walls: Clapboard on wood frame, with corner boards.
4. Structural system, framing: Braced frame, post and beam following the usual eighteenth-century pattern. Corner posts are evident throughout the house and pegged rafters are seen in the attic.
5. Porches, stoops: Brownstone steps lead to the front door and stone steps approach the south door. A covered porch extends along the south side of the ell and there is a bulkhead entrance to the back of the main house. In the nineteenth century a one-bay entrance porch was added over the front door but it has since been removed.
6. Chimneys: The large central chimney extends though the peak of the roof of the main house and has a corbeled cap. There is a small chimney on the outside of the north side of the house which carries the furnace flue. Another interior chimney is at the west end of the ell. All are painted gray to match the house.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: There are Dutch exterior doors, the oldest being on the south side of the ell. It has two large molded panels in each half, and the sections can be held together with a brass latch. The front door is flanked by pilasters which support an entablature which may be the remnants of an earlier porch. There are four lights over the front door. The newer door added to the south side of the house has the crosette trim seen frequently in nineteenth-century Saybrook.
  - b. Windows and shutters: Most of the windows in the main house are double-hung sash with six-over-six lights. The exterior trim is plain and the sills do not project at all. The windows are topped with a small molded cornice. Only two windows show on the back of the main house: one with nine-over-nine lights on the first floor and one with six-over-nine lights on the second, both of which have an architrave trim. On the north side of the ell are two with twelve-over-twelve lights, one of which is undoubtedly original because the cornice projects slightly over it while there is no cornice over the newer one. One three-window bay has been added in the southeast room on the first floor.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The main house has a steeply pitched gable roof and the ell has a symmetrical gambrel roof. A shed roof covers the ell porch. All roofs are covered with wood shingles.
- b. Cornice, eaves: There is a molded cornice over a plain wood frieze which continues on the cornice returns and under the gable line of the roof on the main house. The side of the ell also has a molded cornice and on the back of the ell a plain flat rake follows the line of the gambrel roof. This might help to date the ell as being earlier than the main house which has the molded cornice more typical of a later date.
- c. Dormers: There are two shed dormers which are more modern additions to the ell.

B. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The main entrance is through the center bay of the facade into a small hall with a room on either side. Behind the two front rooms is one long room with a small room at the north side. The second floor has basically the same plan but alterations have been made for bathrooms.
2. Stairways: The main stairway extends from the hall and in front of the chimney. The stairway ascends in three stages: three risers, then a landing, five risers, then a landing, and three risers. There is a molded nosing under the treads and simply carved brackets. Molded paneling fills the space in the porch beneath the steps.
3. Flooring: There are many floors of very wide boards with most replacement on the first floor. The floor boards on the second floor of the ell are narrower and undoubtedly this was finished off later.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The ceilings and walls are plastered. On the first floor the kitchen has been modernized but there are remnants of a vertical board wainscot topped with a chair rail. In the main house the large west room has a wainscot of molded paneling and there is a molded cornice in the northeast room. On the second floor in the hallway between the two present bathrooms there is a wall made of very wide vertical beaded boards.

5. Doorways: Many of the doors have five molded panels in three tiers. Both hinges have most of the doors in place today and most doors and windows have architrave trim.
6. Decorative features and trim: The house has six fireplaces including the large one in the kitchen. It has a large stone hearth and the opening is surrounded by a plain beaded trim. The Dutch oven is covered with a paneled door. Some mid nineteenth-century additions have been made to some fireplaces but the second-floor southeast room fireplace still has a very simple mantel shelf with molded paneling above it.
7. Hardware: There are several interesting examples of hardware in the house including a latch with bean cusp on the door to the north bathroom on the second floor. This is certainly hand-wrought and small leather washers can still be seen on the cusp, indicating that it is original to this door. Most of the interior doors have brass knobs.

C. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The facade of the house, which faces east, is now near the Main Street sidewalk with a driveway to the north of the house and lawns and plantings on the south and west. There is still a well near the ell porch.
2. Outbuildings: In the mid nineteenth century, J. Treadwell, who then owned the Timothy Pratt House, moved a building from the corner of Main Street and the Old Boston Post Road to its present location just north of the Timothy Pratt House. It was used as a store and belonged to this property. It is now under separate ownership.

Prepared by: Priscilla M. Thompson  
Old Saybrook Preservation Society  
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